

Section I: General Advice for All Essays

On the day of the national exam, you first answer 70 multiple choice questions in 55 minutes. You'll then have a 5-10 minutes break before starting the Essay section. Below is a table summarizing how the Essay Section fits into the overall exam.

Section	Multiple Choice	Free Response (Essay)		
Weight	50%	50%		
# of Questions	70	16.67%	16.67%	16.67%
Time Allowed	55 minutes	EBQ Evidence Based Question	CCOT Continuity & Change Over Time	Comparative (Compare and Contrast)
Suggested Pace	~ 45 seconds per question	10 minute mandatory reading/planning period, then 120 self-budgeted minutes to write all 3 essays.		
		40-45 minutes	35-40 minutes	35-40 minutes

Mandatory Reading Period

When the Essay section begins, you'll receive a green booklet containing all three essays. You have 10 minutes to read all the questions, including the Sources for the EBQ, take notes, and begin to plan your essays. You are NOT allowed to begin writing the actual essays during these 10 minutes. Note: You can (& probably *should*) take MORE than 10 minutes, though probably no more than 20 minutes total during the exam period. After 10 minutes you'll be given a pink booklet with blank lined pages on which to write your essays.

Big Mistake #1: Wasting 10 min Reading/Planning Period

One of the biggest mistakes students make during the AP Exam is not using the 10-min mandatory reading/planning period to plan and outline their essays. Too often students simply stare into space, think about what they're going to do after school, etc. The time is a great opportunity to:

1. brainstorm evidence
2. write an outline of your essays' paragraph structure
3. write a 1st draft of your essays' theses.

As the next two hours unfold, you can then look back over your notes and outline to make sure you write as good an essay as possible.

Maximizing your Score

IF you **Plan More**, you CAN **Write Better**³

You do not *have to* write the EBQ first. You can write the essays in any order. There's no "trick" for which to write first, last, etc. Also note that while the exam proctor will remind you during the writing time that "you have x minutes remaining," you can spend as much or as little time as you want on each essay, so you'll need to be self-disciplined in order to write three high-quality essays in the time allowed.

Maximizing your Score

Each point on an Essay is worth more than 2.5 Multiple Choice questions!⁴

Core Scoring

Next, realize that APWH essays are graded according to a rubric. The rubric for each type of essay is slightly different, but all three essays' rubrics require the essay to satisfy 5-6 "Core" characteristics. If, and only if, *all* of these "Core" characteristics are satisfied, then the essay is eligible for "Expanded Core" (extra credit) points. The "Expanded Core" categories are basically just the same as the Core categories, but require a higher quality of performance. The Rubrics are structured this way to encourage students to write well-rounded essays. On a practical level this means it is crucial to know what the "Core" characteristics are so that one can satisfy all the "Core" requirements, as well as then possibly earning "Expanded Core" points. The "Core" characteristics are worth 7 points, while the Expanded Core is worth 2 additional points. Thus, the maximum possible score for each essay is 9.

Asset Model

One last thing to note is that the scoring of the essays is done on an "asset model." That is, the scorers want to give you every point that you deserve and are looking for every opportunity to do so. What this means, practically speaking, is that they will read over your errors rather than remove points. So, be daring and do everything that is required and more. Do not let fear of errors hold you back to a timid standard on the AP World History essays. Study the rubrics in this section so that you know what is scored on each essay.

³ Great advice from Chirs Wolfe, formerly of Bellermine College Prep, San Jose, CA.

⁴ Actually, each essay point is worth 2.59 multiple choice questions.